GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
AGRICULTURE
LOK SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:828
ANSWERED ON:24.11.2009
DEVELOPMENT OF BARREN LAND
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Will the Minister of AGRICULTURE be pleased to state:

(a) the total area of barren and fallow land in the country, separately, state-wise;

(b) whether the said areas have increased during the last three years;

(c) if so, the details thereof including reasons therefor, state-wise;

(d) whether the government has formulated any scheme for the development of such lands;

(f) the steps taken by the government to check the use of agricultural land for non agricultural purposes; and

(g) the details of barren land converted into agricultural land during each of the last three years, state-wise?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF AGRICULTURE AND MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (PROF. K.V. THOMAS)

(a) to (c): As per available estimates, the total area of Barren Land was about 17.59 million ha. in the year 2004-05 and has reduced to 17.44 million ha. in the year 2006-07. During the same period area under fallow land has increased from 25.21 million ha. to 25.72 million ha. The State-wise details of barren and fallow land is annexed.

(d) & (e): The Government of India, Ministry of Agriculture is implementing various Centrally Sponsored/Central Sector Programmes/Schemes namely,
(i) National Watershed Development Project for Rainfed Areas (NWDPRA),
(ii) Soil Conservation in the Catchments of River Valley Project and Flood Prone River (RVP & FPR),
(iii) Reclamation of alkali & Development of Acid Soils (RADAS) and
(iv) Watershed Development Project in Shifting Cultivation Areas (WDPSCA) for development of degraded lands including fallow lands with the main objective of preventing soil erosion, land degradation, maintaining balance in different types of land uses, increasing moisture and groundwater recharge, sustaining productivity etc. Parts of such developed lands are brought under cultivation to maintain balance in different types of land uses. It is because of these programmes that the Net Sown Area in the country has remained approximately the same level i.e. 141 million ha. despite increase in area under non-agricultural uses.

(f): The National Policy for Farmers − 2007 has recommended that Prime farmland must be conserved for agriculture except under exceptional circumstances, provided that the agencies that are provided with agricultural land for non-agricultural projects should compensate for treatment and full development of equivalent degraded/ wastelands elsewhere. For non-agricultural purposes, as far as possible, land with low biological potential for farming would be earmarked and allocated. State Governments have been accordingly advised to earmark lands with low biological potential such as uncultivable land, land affected by salinity, acidity, etc., for non-agricultural development activities, including industrial and construction activities.

(g): According to the definition of Land Uses, barren land includes all land covered by mountains, deserts, etc. which cannot be brought under cultivation except at an exorbitant cost and is classified as un-culturable land located in isolated blocks or within cultivated holdings, and therefore, there is no comprehensive scheme/programme for the development of barren land.